

September 21, 1999

Al Gore: Quick to Condemn “Arms-for-Hostages,” but What About “Terrorists-for-Votes?”

On August 11, 1999, President Clinton offered clemency to 16 felons aligned with the Armed Forces of National Liberation (the Spanish acronym is FALN), a group devoted to the violent pursuit of Puerto Rican independence, whose terrorist acts have killed six Americans and injured at least 84 more. Fourteen accepted the clemency offer and two rejected it.

They weren't the only two.

After initially supporting the clemency offer, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton said it should be withdrawn, despite (or perhaps due to) the perception that the offer was extended to build support within New York's Puerto Rican community for her likely Senate candidacy. In the House of Representatives, 311 members (including 93 Democrats) condemned the deal. The Senate soon followed, with 95 senators (43 of them Democrats) calling the deal “deplorable.”

Notably, one federal official who has not voiced an opinion on President Clinton's terrorists-for-votes deal is Vice President/President of the Senate/presidential candidate Al Gore:

Gore has said only that he is “not going to stand in judgment” of the president's clemency decision. Gore aides privately emphasize that the vice president's statement is hardly an endorsement of clemency.

“The vice president hasn't spoken out,” Rep. Xavier Becerra, D-Calif., lamented after a pep rally Tuesday launching Gore's effort to amass support in the Hispanic community.

*AP Online
September 15, 1999*

Giving in to Terrorists' Demands?

It is disturbing that the Vice President is unwilling to condemn making concessions to terrorists. Although the FALN members offered clemency were not convicted of killing Americans, they are clearly associates of those who have killed Americans. In fact, the FALN committed bombings to draw attention to their "jailed comrades and members" and made demands on their behalf:

On the late evening of Monday, February 28, 1982, four powerful bombs detonated in front of business institutions in New York's financial district. The FALN claimed credit via a five page communiqué which was found in a phone booth at 91st and Riverside Avenue after an anonymous call was received by someone claiming to be the FALN.

In this communique, the FALN stated that their jailed comrades and members of their organization were being mistreated in jail.

The FALN identified its jailed comrades and members as Oscar Lopez-Rivera, Lucy Rodriguez, Carlos Alberto Torres, Haydee Torres, Luis Rosa, Alicia Rodriguez, Ricardo Jimenez, Dylcia Pagan Morales, Adolfo Matos Antongiorgi, Elizam Escobar, Carmen Valentin. [Emphasis added.]

Testimony of Donald R. Wofford
FBI Special Agent (Ret.)

Seventeen years after the bombings, the FALN got their way.

This month, President Clinton offered clemency to nine of the FALN's "jailed comrades and members": Oscar Lopez-Rivera, Ida Luz "Lucy" Rodriguez, Luis Rosa, Alicia Rodriguez, Ricardo Jimenez, Dylcia Pagan Morales, Adolfo Matos Antongiorgi, Elizam Escobar, and Carmen Valentin. Oscar Lopez-Rivera refused clemency. The remaining eight are now free.

Vice President Gore's unwillingness to "stand in judgment" of this concession contrasts with his message to domestic terrorists in the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing:

And to those of you who doubt our resolve in America, listen closely. If you plot terror or act on those designs, within our borders or without, against American citizens, we will hunt you down and stop you cold.

The Vice President's position also contrasts with his quick condemnation of the Reagan Administration's involvement in the Iran-Contra "arms-for-hostages" deal:

Sen. Gore: I think this was one of the most serious mistakes of the Reagan Presidency. . . .

MacNeil: How about that, Senator Gore? I think what Congressman Cheney is saying, the U.S. policy of not rewarding terrorism . . . is still intact.

Sen. Gore: It's not intact at all. And that defense, if he will forgive me for saying so, strikes me as very disingenuous. . . . It is absolutely incredible. It is indefensible.

The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour
November 13, 1986

A Few Questions

Given that Vice President Gore is a heartbeat away from becoming the most powerful man in the world — and hopes to be elected to the presidency himself — he has an obligation to answer a few questions for the American people:

- Does Mr. Gore agree with the First Lady's revised position that clemency for these terrorists was improper?
- As a Democrat, does Mr. Gore agree with 93 House Democrats that freeing these terrorists was a "deplorable" act?
- As the President of the Senate, does Al Gore agree with 95 Senators (including 43 Democrats) that President Clinton's grant of clemency was "deplorable?"
- Does Mr. Gore believe, in the wake of President Clinton's clemency grant to the FALN, that the U.S. position of not making concessions to terrorists is intact?
- If, during Iran-Contra, the motivations were the release of American hostages, while President Clinton's motivations were to help his wife's political prospects, would clemency for the FALN be even more "indefensible?"
- If the Vice President is truly "not going to stand in judgment" of the current president's decision, then as a candidate for president himself, could he at least tell the country whether making concessions to terrorists is a policy he would continue through a Gore Administration?

If the Vice President doesn't think this issue serious enough to merit his time and attention, perhaps he should peruse a recent article that illustrated the lack of penitence of at least one of the terrorists freed by the President (in statements made before he renounced violence as a condition of clemency), and the problem their freedom leaves at the feet of the public and our justice system:

Adolfo Matos wasn't about to apologize. The Puerto Rican nationalist was serving a 70-year sentence for conspiracy and weapons charges at a California prison. Last April he scoffed when a female friend asked about the hardships of prison life. It has been "one of the greatest investments of my life, to give my life for something I believe in," Matos said. Would he ask for a pardon? No, Matos said. "For the justice of my people . . . my desire has gotten stronger. . . I don't have to ask forgiveness from anybody." The conversation was full of "revolutionary rhetoric," and showed "no remorse," said one official. It also was captured on tape by the Bureau of Prisons, which monitors inmates' calls. "Aren't all these calls recorded?" the woman asked. Replied Matos, "I don't care."

. . . Still, with Congress demanding to know why Clinton released the prisoners and how dangerous they might still be, Justice officials are exhaustively searching for tapes of the inmates' phone calls to determine what else they might have said. It's still unclear why no one bothered to search earlier, before Clinton released the nationalists.

Newsweek
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Clinton's clemency deal allowed 11 members of this avowed terrorist group, each one of them a convicted felon, an early release from prison. They are now free and walking the streets. Americans deserve to know if there would be any more terrorists freed during a Gore Administration.

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